# CALLIOPE

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Spring 2024

The Student Journal of Art & Literature

# Calliope

The Student Journal of Art and Literature

Volume XXI - Spring 2024

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# Acknowledgements

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Submissions are welcomed from September through February each year at Calliope@nvcc.edu. Submission guidelines are available at http://www.nvcc.edu/student-life/arts/calliope.html. *Calliope* reserves the right to reprint and present submitted works on the *Calliope* website and other media. Students interested in joining the *Calliope* staff as interns should contact the editors at the address above.

# Letter From the Editors

Here we are again with another memorable edition of *Calliope*. It has been a pleasure for all of us at *Calliope* to read such strong, insightful literary pieces and view such engaging artwork. NOVA is certainly blessed with many talented students, without whom *Calliope* could not exist.

The entire staff at *Calliope* hopes that the journal can be a college-wide publication in the future and allow even more individuals to share their creativity with NOVA and create a greater sense of belonging.

From all of us at *Calliope*,

Happy reading!

Til Turner

Adam Chiles

calliope kal<e>i:opi. U.S. (Gr. Kallioph)

(beautiful-voiced), the ninth of the Muses,
presiding over eloquence and heroic poetry.

1. An instrument consisting of a series of
steam-whistles toned to produce musical notes,
played by a keyboard like that of an organ;

2. attrib. calliope hummingbird,
a hummingbird, sellula calliope, of the
Western United States and Mexico.
Oxford English Dictionary

***First Prize - Fiction***

Rebecca Woodford

# The Exchange

At last, I had found him. I could tell by the brown flat cap and bristly black mustache. His beady, rat-like eyes shifted to and fro like he was always plotting something. I watched as he fell into step behind a woman, who was blissfully unaware of the murderer who followed behind. I called my brothers, who gathered around me, peering down and chattering to each other. Yes, this was him, they confirmed. One pointed out the slight limp in his gait and another remarked on his clothes, gray and unassuming. Like he was trying to blend in. I hadn't noticed these things, my mind was too busy going through every way I wanted to make him pay.

"Hold," I told them as they shifted anxiously. "Wait for him to get closer."

I focused my senses, the sounds of the city fading to a background buzz of white noise. The murderer's eyes narrowed with intent, a look I recognized well. He had worn the same expression when he charged us, rod in hand. Our cousin was too old, too slow. The first swing had left him bloody and broken. His weak cry for help as the murderer raised his weapon again still haunts the edge of my awareness.

To this day, we still don't know why. We had only been eating. There had been so much food, surely he wouldn't have missed a few mouthfuls? Surely he wouldn't have laid it all out and left it alone if he didn't want us to partake?

The murderer didn't end up getting as close as I would have liked. He lunged forward, grabbing the woman by the arm and using his other hand to cover her mouth. I heard her muffled scream, and instantly changed my plan. "Now, attack!" I screeched, diving from the tree. I heard my brothers follow, their battle cries attracting the attention of the man.

"Go for the eyes!"

"Yes, the eyes!"

"We shall have our revenge!"

The man cried out as we began our assault, swinging wildly at us as we clawed, bit, and slapped. He released the woman, who stumbled and fell backwards onto the pavement. She yelled something, but I was too focused on my mission to listen. Blood began to pour from the man's cuts, its acrid stench spurring us into pure bloodlust. He switched from offense to defense, covering his face with his hands. So we tore those up too. He ran, and we followed. People on the street turned to watch in bewilderment as we chased him down the street, but none stepped in to help. They must have thought that he had earned the wrath of us dark avengers.

At last, the murderer ducked into a building, where he knew we could not follow. I called for a retreat, much to the chagrin of my brothers. "He has been warned," I reasoned as we followed the blood trail back to our hideaway. "He will live the rest of his life in fear of us."

"Yes, yes! A fate worse than death!"

"He shall flinch at every shadow!"

"Cower at every call!"

When we returned, the woman from before was no longer alone. Another person in black with a shiny badge had come to speak with her, and judging by her body language, she was no longer in danger. She heard our arrival, and walked to the base of the tree, gazing up and trying to spot us amongst the leaves.

"Thank you," she said.

We did not do it for her. We did it for our fallen cousin. We still appreciated the food she left under our tree the next morning.

This began a daily ritual, and soon we felt her debt had been repaid. Still she fed us. She spoke to us, too. She even named us. We already had names, of course, but she didn't know that. I was Poe. My brothers were Crowley, Cawford, and Edgar.

"I know Poe and Edgar better fit ravens," she had said. "But crows are close enough, right?" We were most certainly not, I wanted to tell her, but of course she did not understand. Soon enough though, we could at least repeat our names.

"Poe?" I would say. That always earned me an extra peanut. She began repeating a word to us, too: "Melanie."

"That must be her name," I reasoned.

"We must do something for Melanie!"

"Yes, yes! Humans like shinies, right?"

"Let's bring her shinies!"

"Not just shinies," I argued. "They like green paper, too. And feathers." They all nodded. Of course they knew that.

So began our exchange. She smiled at our gifts that we left at the base of our tree. Especially the green paper, except maybe one time, where the green paper made her cry. She still thanked us, over and over. "I can make my rent," she said. I didn't know what that meant, but at least she didn't reject it.

We watched as she found a mate, and soon enough she had hatchlings running behind her. They too would leave us food, and so we brought them gifts, too.

"And so, my son," I say now to my own hatchling. "Melanie is a friend. Never attack Melanie, her mate, or her hatchlings. Now once more, I shall describe to you the murderer, who you should try your hardest to kill."

***First Prize - Artwork***

Olivia Andres

# Dreamy Days

Acrylic Painting

***First Prize - Creative Nonfiction***

Aigul Egemberdieva

# Trees in My Life

It was an ordinary morning, unremarkable. I was finishing my morning mantra, a cup of coffee, when I came across news about the change of the flag in my country. For three decades, my small country has been trying to get off its knees. Presidents and cultural values change. What remained unchanged was a piece of fabric that gave hope. One of the country's leaders decided to spend the rest of the state budget on changing the symbol of independence.

Immigration is when someone already lives in another country but continues to follow the news of their homeland. My social media feed resembles exploding confetti. News in English, Russian, Kyrgyz languages. The topic might start with the AI Bill of Rights Blueprint. Suddenly, a pumpkin pie recipe pops up. Footage of a military skirmish in the Russian-Ukrainian war will immediately appear. The news will end with the level of snow in Bishkek. Over the past four years, my stomach, like a cast-iron pot, has learned to digest any news. But I choked on the news about the flag.

My country reminds me of a lonely tree in the yard. Low, bushy, crooked. Its shadow is not rich, but on a hot day, it will save any traveler, giving him a place in the shade and giving him the strength to move on. Perhaps one day the tree will even bear fruit. But the parasites eat the crop, not allowing it to bloom to its full potential. When there is a strong wind, the leaves on the tree fall off and scatter in all directions. I want to sweep under this tree, gather the leaves together. I pick one up, twirl it with two fingers and notice how unique it is. And beautiful.

In recent years, I have seen many new trees. They are rich and generous. This is a whole forest in which you can lose yourself. Or vice versa, tread a new path and find yourself. The rustling of leaves sounds different, and I still find it difficult to understand. I want to speak to the forest in its language, but this is not enough. You need to feel every new tree, but for me, it's still a mystery. Can I sit under its shadow? Can I taste the harvest? Are these fruits edible? Another language, new smells, a foreign land.

Everyone said that the first year of immigration is the most difficult. "You'll miss your mom, your friends, the food," they said. Where did they get this from? Don't listen to these people. Listen to those who left their country and then returned. And we're not talking about tourists. Tourists feel good everywhere, and for them, all the trees are alike. What about years of uprooted life? The second, third, and remaining years mirror the first. I don't miss my mom, my friends, or the food. I miss everything. My pain is spread evenly throughout my life. I miss myself.

My childhood, which included my dad and mom. Every weekend spent in the mountains. The charm of a fire and fresh-cut grass. A herd of sheep and a shepherd dog. Asters in spring and roses in autumn. Red pioneer ties and white bows in the

girls' hair. Knee-deep snow and slippery roads. Library by day and books by night. Strawberries in June, cherries in July, watermelons in August. The rest of the months also have a queue of fruits and berries. Just not in winter. In winter, these are harsh dried fruits. They were so dry and hard that they pulled out teeth faster than doctors.

The smells of my happiness. Dad's hands outstretched to me. Mom's perfume. My grandmother's fresh flatbread. Grass after rain. Mountain wind, tearing away any pain. The smell of snow, cleansing the city of dirt and virus. Sounds of my life. Shouts from sellers at the market. Wedding music playing poorly and smoothed over by the happiness of the newlyweds. The echo of a muezzin flying like a bird into the sky. Laughter at the family table. A child's cry. A child's laughter. The mood of my life. Chess with father. The song of an akyn, in a trance, talking for hours about the exploits of Manas. Rare meetings with friends. My son's first "mommy". The colors of my rainbow. Sea blue of your favorite lake. Green pistachio chains of scattered mountains. White carpet of cotton fields. Red, victorious like the country's flag.

“You’ll miss your mom, your friends, the food,” they said. Why didn’t anyone warn me that I would miss irrevocable things? I miss the country's flag. I was deprived of this memory. Soft rays of the sun warmly spreading across the red fabric and fluttering in the wind. They were replaced with sharp ones, pierced into the heart of each of the 6 million Kyrgyzstanis.

For me, even a short, bushy, crooked tree is the most beautiful. Now I myself am like a felled tree whose roots are in the past. The trunk is bleeding, but tenaciously holds on to each leaf. Each of them is me. Each of them is Kyrgyz. Each of them contains a memory. I will save every one of them. For those whose life once took a somersault, this is not the first.

It will be an ordinary morning, unremarkable. I'll finish my morning mantra, a cup of coffee, and scroll through my news feed. The topic will begin with the end of the conflict in Palestine. Then I'll read about the Mexican border decision. And then I'll go plant a new tree. The tree of my life.

***Second Prize - Artwork***

Thanh Dan Do

# Portrait of My Friend with the Moustache She's Always Wanted and Her Dead Dog

Acrylic Painting

***First Prize - Poetry***

Kalina Massie

# Ocean Longing Pt. 2

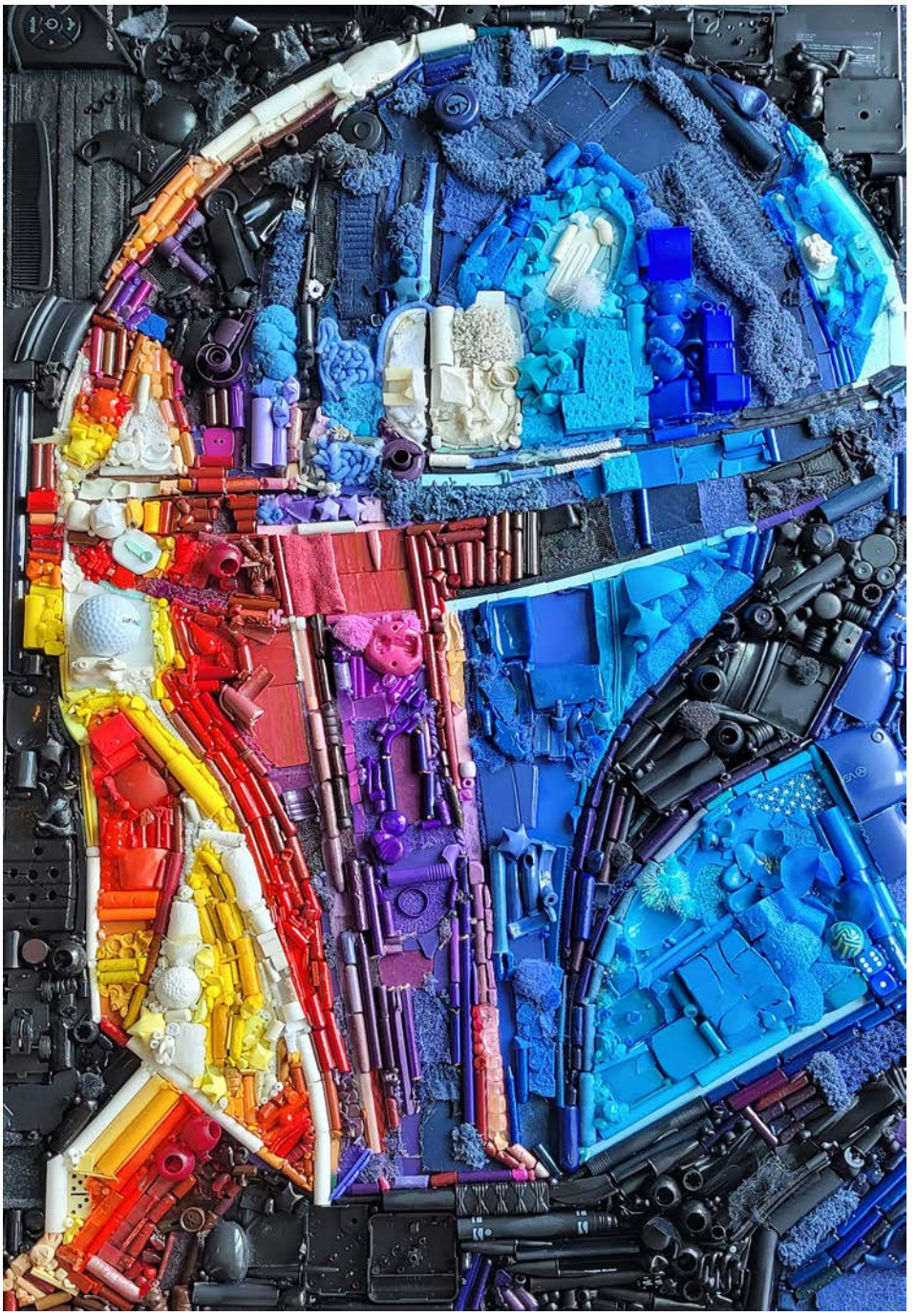
The water went to sleep
When the moon
Rose. She dreamt of
Daylight and warmth –
Sunny rays like
Nostalgic Summers
Past.
There was falseness
In that light. The
Warmth of a blanket
Feeding light to the
Life nestled beneath
The surface.
Fever.
The ocean had a
Fever. She woke
The break of dawn
Threatening to steal
Her lies
Take them away.
Those secret moments, sweet
whisperings, comforting
embraces
Figments of
Subconscious waters.
The day progressed
seemingly innocent
Life fire ablaze
In the sky.
She basked
Forced to share
with the world.
If only the ocean
could devour
the sun.

***Third Prize - Artwork***

Abigail Jensen

# Elements

Sculpture: Found objects on foam and cardboard



***Second Prize - Fiction***

Nawaal Nackerdien

# Raspberries, Lilies, and Heritage Tomatoes

I lift and let gravity pull the head of the trowel down. It hits with a 'thunk,' almost wanting to jump but I hold it still with a hand to the middle of the handle. I pull, easing my arms backwards and feeling the consequences live in the lower of my back. Sweat washes the insides of my elbows. I stop.

There's white in the soil. It lingers there, half buried in dark brown grain that I can't quite see it. I pinch my eyes trying to stare closer at it. It's small but larger than my front-teeth and some type of round bug runs around a part of its surface. I lean down.

"You're really trying ya-self this time," Pa says and I jump a bit. He raises an eyebrow, moving forward holding a tray with three glasses of Jermie's citrus jam. Jermie peeled the oranges and lemons himself, cutting into the citrus til it was bleeding juice. They were sliced and placed in the jar, sealed heavily, and left to melt in sugar.

Now they spin in water, almost ringing like orange brass in the sunlight. He sets them down on a stump and then stands. Pa's broad shoulders almost make the stump look demure. His height always pushes the rest of us down to the ground. And he always casts long shadows.

A second later I hold ice between my teeth and sweetness cools underneath my tongue and down my throat. Pa cuffs me on the back of the neck and I can immediately tell he was outside the back of the barn by the way the grime on his fingers sticks to the sweat on the back of my neck. "Look at ya, gulping it down. Ya need to take it easy." His hold squeezes a bit harder, almost cutting into my hair, sharp.

I shove his arm off and crunch the ice between my teeth, "get lost, Pa. Where's Alice?" I peer past his shoulders towards the side of the house layered in green shade, "she out-back?" There's nothing but the faint rustle of leaves poking out from the white siding of the house. The shade that lays before it is dark.

"Your sister is evaporating beneath the tomatoes. Don't know why she insisted on helping if she's just going to melt any use away." I stop. When I lower my glass I see a funny expression on Pa's face.

I frown and stare at the ribbons beneath his eyes. The white spot that stains the hook of his nose. His frustration mars the lower half of his face, jowls lifting at the cheekbones, and I shake my head. "Old men are getting older, Pa. Alice's always been Alice. Lemme go check on her." The glass descends back onto the tray, and I shift my shoulders before pushing them backwards to get rid of the hardening already setting into the muscles.

Pa remains behind me, a statue gone still, as I head towards our home. It lives tall and fading. The whites on the paneling are pulling their fingers away and I can't see the

insides from here. The ash besides everything holds the rope our tire-swing used to be attached to. It tore off one storm while the branches bent down to its will in the dark. I had stood at the window looking out, the world spread far into the horizon under dark blue thrashing clouds and living wind. It caught the swing and the dark green of the leaves and lifted them occasionally for lightning to flash. And then the next moment the tire was gone.

I palm the slipping thickness of the rope as I pass, the coarse hairs stringing through my fingers. The heat of the sun doesn't live here in the somber shade, and it grips sudden cold into the areas where my short shirt-sleeves meet my skin. I only stand a moment making my way to the far side of our home. My scalp prickles.

"Alice," I call, Pa's copse of purple raspberries, tomatoes and amongst them, nestled, lilies shuddering into view. Pa planted the lilies when Alice was born, her head of hair black like tar. I had touched the fuzz and stared up at Pa with wonder. He had chuffed the back of my neck, 'be a good one to her, okay?' The next day while Alice still lay at the hospital, he had cleared out a patch in the garden, got his hands full of grime and killed worms and laid one fine lily in the soil.

"Alice?" When I pull through the shrubbery to the heritage tomatoes, there's nothing but slow reddening fruit the size of my fist. They're almost too full, choking with round sides. If we don't pick them soon, they'll become pitted by gnats. Giant brown holes that have rough edges that could squish beneath the fingers. And then they slowly deflate as if sucked of juice. They tend to sag like wet paper bags, holes driven into the skin and flies buzzing and standing on their surface.

I glance around to any of the trees and their green shade, but she doesn't lay beneath their branches. The wind shakes a bit and the shadows scatters long across the lawn. They live long and dark, just like Pa's.

I press my lips together and glance towards the back door. The single inset window is black. "Alice, Pa has Jermie's jam out-front. He got the ratio right this time, not too much water." I pass the raspberries and the leaves shake with a heavy wind. The sound is almost like when Alice and I filled a plastic bottle full of rice as kids and shook it hard. Some greenery smacks into my arm and I whip it back. A flash of the tire rope enters my mind. I move a little faster.

A shoe peeks out from where the lilies are nestled. "Alice," I say, something like relief and not, entering my chest.

Beneath the whites of the petals, Alice's face lays upturned. Her eyebrows are relaxed, her mouth slightly open with her hand on her chest. Red lays glistening in the sunlight to appear like raspberry jam sticking to the wood counter in our kitchen. It sticks to the side of her forehead, slightly touching the top of her ear and yet also missing just by a hair's breadth. Three of the lilies is tucked into her hair.

And yet here face is as pale as the insides of the ash. The red that stains are darker, almost the bitter insides of a spoiled pomegranate. In her hairline lay three black hollow circles, the white petals dance above them, the stems placed neatly into the holes as if they were due to be repotted. Besides her lays a slow growing pit, brown earth shoveled out, Pa's green spoked rake pointing to the sky, clumps and raspberry jam smeared

across its points.

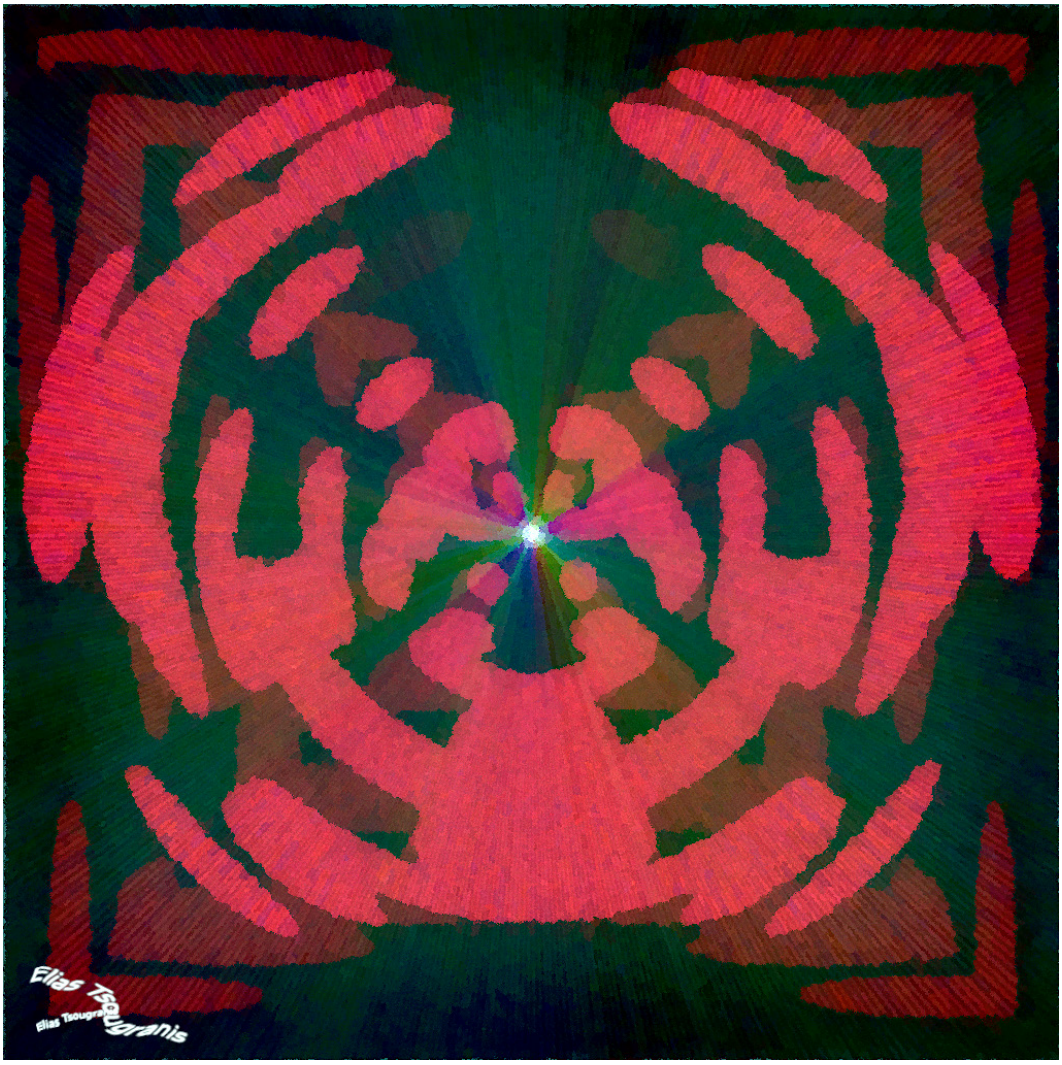
I step closer to the hole. The cavern yawns beneath my feet.

"Don't go trying anything now," Pa's voice floats from behind me. I turn and he's sipping from one of the glasses. He rips a raspberry off the bush, squeezes the juice into the glass so that red transfuses through towards the bottom. He takes another sip and chucks the rest away. "You still have to put your ma's pinky back into the soil."

Elias Tsougranis

## Crebula

Digital Media



***Second Prize - Creative Nonfiction***

Julianna Mastri

# War and Stone Fruits

The aroma suffocated the dense, dewy morning air. This meant the day every person in the Ukrainian countryside looked forward to had come: the apricots were ripe. I was awoken at six A.M. by my grandfather. My eyes won the tug-of-war against my eyelids, allowing me to slowly look up to see him standing just three feet in front of me with four metal buckets clenched in his calloused fists and a child-like grin stretched across his face. The rest of my family was asleep. They went to sleep last night hoping to not be woken up by this seventy-three-year-old human alarm. My entire family dreaded this day. This day meant spending five hours in the scorching heat, hoping for a moment's relief once some sweat evaporates. But it also meant spending those hours talking to my grandfather about everything and anything life had to offer. The latter made this my favorite day. Now, I do detest the kind of heat that leaves you feeling branded by the sun, but it meant having the time to listen to my grandfather for hours on end while picking my favorite fruit. That is an offer I would never be able to refuse. It is an offer that I now cannot refuse due to those trees' only presence being in the form of ash.

February 24th, 2022, was the day I questioned humanity. Frankly, I still do. That day was when the Russo-Ukrainian war escalated. In the frigid winter morning, Russia invaded Ukraine at 5 A.M., and I understood that there is true evil in this world. To set the scene, it was my junior year of high school. I woke up, got dressed, ate my usual two waffles with raspberry yogurt, brushed my teeth, and as I stepped out the door to catch the bus, I froze. I stared at my phone in disbelief. I had received a text from my mother. "Они захватывают Украину": They're taking Ukraine.

Most people do not know this, but the war started in 2014, not 2022, due to Russia's perpetual need for more land—more power. The result: Russia stole Crimea. Russia, more specifically their President, Putin, has a history of making false claims. This man may as well be schizophrenic. He goes around claiming that Ukraine is rightfully Russia's. That Ukrainians are nazis, and their (Jewish) President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, is their nazi leader. Frankly, I believe that if Putin didn't have so much power, he'd be a regular nutjob. But currently, he's a nutjob that has access to nuclear weapons. Putin has even published an essay on how Russia and Ukraine are bound together by a shared origin. He believes that since Russia and Ukraine were originally part of the same region—called Kyivan Rus—from the late 9th century to the early 13th century, that now, in the 21st century, Ukraine must be absorbed by Russia in order for history to be righted. Only by annihilating Ukraine can Russia become itself. His barbarian views are met with his ceaseless thirst for violence. Causing innocent blood to spill all over beauteous Ukrainian land for the sole purpose of greed.

After reading my mother's text, I felt my vision spiraling. My knee joints turned

gelatinous. My body felt inhabited by another mind that wasn't my own. I nearly fell on the ice glazed sidepath, but managed to catch myself. I stood there for about seven minutes until I heard my bus arrive. With the feeling of urgency, I darted to the bus stop to meet my classmates to begin our morning commute to class. After collecting myself, I decided to open CNN. I was instantly greeted with the alarming, bold title "RUSSIA INVADES UKRAINE." At that moment, time became an illusion. A second became an hour. My whole world was muffled as if covered in snow. On the bus, I sat next to my older sister. She had also received the news. Although, we both had differing initial reactions. Upon hearing the news, I began frantically looking at every news article I could find on the invasion. My sister sat in utter silence, staring at the back of the torn, gray bus seat that was covered in dried chewing gum in front of us. As usual, the bus was filled with chatter and gossip at the early hour of seven in the morning. At that moment, it felt like my sister and I were the only people in the country who knew what was happening in Ukraine. Meanwhile, the sixteen-year-old girls next to us were raving about finding the perfect prom dress months before the dance. Meanwhile I sat in silence, reading about the demolition of my second home. That day I didn't cry. In place of tears, I had disbelief. I couldn't believe what was happening. I didn't want to believe it. Of course, with Putin's aggression and him publicly expressing his opinion that Ukraine belongs under the rule of Russia, most people were aware that the invasion was bound to happen. But that didn't take away from the utter shock me and the rest of the world fell victim to.

In April of 2022, my grandfather's childhood home was blown up. Not only did the home house my grandfather during his developmental years but the tens of apricot trees as well. A Russian pilot carelessly dropped a bomb on a home. With the press of a button and a lack of humanity, the pilot demolished a place filled with memories. What remains of the house and apricot trees is pure ash and a couple of bricks. The only survivors were the potatoes grown under the soil. This was not a calculated attack. In fact, it was just the opposite. But it felt as if Putin himself ordered that bomb on the home.

For the first couple of months, I was consumed with anger. Eventually, I realized that merely embodying the emotion of anger was useless. I cannot stand to stay passive while my beliefs and loved ones are attacked. My cousins were living in a bunker in a perpetual state of distress, and all I could do was message them on WhatsApp, asking them if they were still alive. Finding this passivity unbearable, I started taking action. I figured out how to send them a bulletproof vest using the money I had earned from working at Smoothie King that summer. I donated to the Red Cross and World Central Kitchen in hopes of having a direct way to help Ukrainians.

Knowing that I am limited in the ways I can aid Ukraine is beyond exasperating. It's similar to the feeling as though I am running away from a monstrous entity in a nightmare, only to be stuck in one place as the inevitable evil creeps towards me. With this being said, I cannot begin to imagine how the people still currently living in Ukraine feel. The constant fright for their lives. Not knowing whether today is the last day they may ever live if a Russian pilot decides to press a button to disarm a bomb

right over their temporary shelter for that day. And if not a bomb, the possibility of Russian barbarians finding their shelter on foot and creating unnecessary bloodshed. I'm fortunate enough that my family, with the exception of a second cousin that works for the government in the capital of Ukraine, have fled to other countries. My grandparents are in Florida with my Aunt and Uncle, half of the rest of my family is in Switzerland, and the rest in Bulgaria. Since my cousin works for the government in Kyiv, she had to give her daughter over to her sister so that she could take her with her to Switzerland. I cannot fathom why bloody wars still occur in the twenty-first century. It seems it'd be common sense that bloodshed is not a resolution.

I remember the morning of the invasion, all news outlets stated that Ukraine would not last a month against Russia's military force. Nobody suspected that Ukraine stood a chance against the military that ranks second in the world. Ukraine and its people were underestimated. Now, 579 days later, Ukraine is still fighting. The perseverance of Ukrainians hasn't gone unnoticed, and their efforts not futile. I find myself prouder to have Ukrainian blood than ever. The amount of pride I have for my mother's homeland is inconceivable. While I put aside a percentage of each of my paychecks to donate to Ukrainian aid organizations, I dream of a day where I can step back onto Ukrainian soil. I crave the sensation of inhaling and exhaling Ukrainian air. And yearn for the thought of replanting the apricot trees once Ukrainians have ridden the land of Russian invaders.

Maryory Enamorado

# Hands

Charcoal

***Second Prize - Poetry***

Theresa Zukowski

# Dad's Tirade

I dae you ta take me oan
you can't comprahend da laus and fea
I've worked so hawd ta build
afda all dese fucking yeas
how dae you question me
my opinions sewn inta stone
I know who I yam
I know whut I come from
My family is - The Family
dey still make movies 'bout dem today
you don't know whut yua tawkin about
a'ctin like you know moa dan me
I watched my mutha stab a man on tha A train
for grabbin 'er ass and nuthin!
Nobody done nuthin, That's how powerful dey were
I know whut good sawce is `
and fish is s'posed ta have da eyes in
You take awl dis fa granted, kid
you don' eeven know whut I done
I been ta some mean places
and hung around baed men
shua, you know some of dat too
cuz ya brothas was baed, but
you don' know whut it's like ta watch
da cops just letchu commit a crime
and wawk away like nuthin was happenin'
bent as da business end of a crowbaa
I lived trew dat shit, and kid
I'm still hea, and so are you.
Yua welcome.

Dominique Robinson

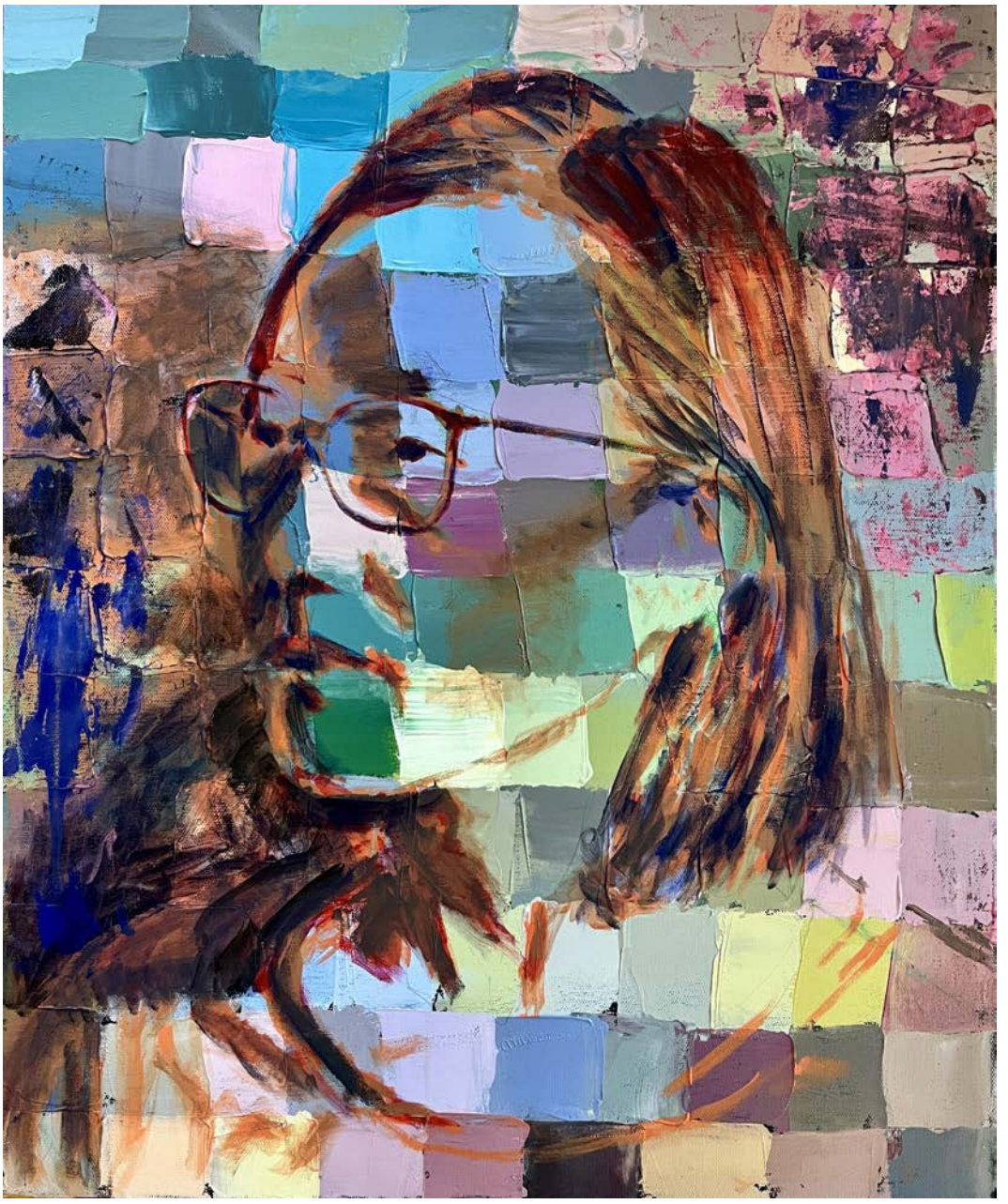
# On My Block

Digital Media

Anastasia Lee

# Portrait and Color Play

Acrylic Painting



***Third Prize - Fiction***

Angel (Xinyi) Zheng

# The Daughter

The door opened with a heavy groan. Eleanor coughed from the cloud of dust that had just blown into her face. Outside, the wind rushed towards her with a howling vengeance, and she managed to squeeze her way inside just as it slammed the door shut with a bang.

Eleanor leaned against the entrance hall, collecting herself. She wanted to breathe a sigh of relief, but the choking, stinging air prevented her from doing so. All she had to do was find her way upstairs, she reminded herself. Then it would all be over, one way or another.

It was a more difficult task than she thought. The room was filled with furniture of all kinds, some broken, with ragged edges looming over piles of rubbish on the floor. She stepped gingerly over shards of broken glass, making her way to the staircase. The floorboards creaked under her feet when she moved, rejecting her intrusion after years of relative peace. When she ascended the first step of the stairway, the wood almost shrieked in protest. Outside, the wind still howled, tearing through the leaves and the fields in powerful bursts. The house groaned with the force of the blows, wearily announcing that there was nothing for her, not here, so she should just leave.

As she ascended the staircase, there was a sharp, rattling sound, and a violent shudder about the entire structure that made Eleanor fear it would collapse at any moment. A faded picture crashed to the floor. Eleanor could just make out a summer scene – a family vacation with a mother, father, and child. They were all smiling, the mother most happily of all. She gritted her teeth. Ignoring the sounds and the picture, she forged ahead.

As Eleanor reached the landing, she saw the room she was looking for. Through the crack in the door, she could see the impossible glow of a fire, the first hint of warmth the house had seen in ages. She entered without hesitation.

Inside, a wasted, elderly woman lay on a large four-poster bed. Pacing around one end of the bed was a doctor in a white coat. The window beside him was shut tightly, and this, along with the crackling of the fire, did much to drown out the storm. Another man sat beside him, wearing the long, black frock of a priest, and an air of eternal solemnity. Eleanor felt herself relax a bit, at the sight of another living soul.

"Mother," Eleanor called to the woman first.

The priest approached her. "You are the daughter, I presume?"

"Yes, thank you for contacting me so quickly. I did not want to miss – is she still – "

To this, the man grimaced, and took Eleanor's hand.

"I am sorry," was all he said.

A hearty fire roared in the fireplace, but it could not keep away the chill that night. Eleanor had not seen her mother in fifteen years, and had not spoken to her for even

longer. Now, she will never speak to her again.

There was some satisfaction in that.

"I am to understand," the man in white interjected, "that you are the young lady in charge of this woman's affairs?"

"Yes," replied Eleanor stiffly. "Doctor, it is good to meet you at last. I am grateful for all you have done for her."

"Don't be. I have contacted the undertaker for you. He will be here tomorrow afternoon, but in the meantime…" The doctor looked pointedly around the room. "I know it is difficult, when they become hoarders --"

"And reclusive," added Eleanor, with a sort of vindicative feeling.

The priest pulled up a chair for her, and she sat down gratefully.

She suddenly felt very tired, as if a great, crushing weight had been lifted from her shoulders. She had not spoken to her mother for more than fifteen years, and now she never will. The broken furniture still laid downstairs, in splinters waiting to be cleaned up. This house hates her, her mother screamed into the wind the last time they spoke. She was never supposed to come back – except now, she just did.

"Father – the last rites?"

"They have been delivered."

Eleanor nodded. It was all her mother had spoken of, obsessively, in those last days before Eleanor finally left. To finally be delivered from this terrible life with her ungrateful daughter, and be reunited with her husband.

Well, she had what she wanted now. The last rites, Eleanor could arrange. But sitting in that room, staring into that pale, hateful face, Eleanor was sure – wonderfully, mercilessly sure -- that they would not be enough.

Michelle Champagny

# Untitled

Graphite

*Third Prize - Creative Nonfiction*

Dani Olson

# Between Two Worlds

Growing up, I never thought my family was different. I had four loving parents and two annoying but lovable siblings. We didn't do everything together since my birth parents were divorced, but we all tried to stay close as a family. It wasn't until I went to school that I learned that my family was definitely not the standard. All four of my parents are 100% fully, capital D Deaf. I quickly learned that people didn't really understand what that meant; To have parents that used a language with no spoken words. They'd often ask stupid questions like "Can they drive?", "Do they read braille?", and my favorite "Why aren't you deaf?", as if somehow deaf people could only produce other deaf people. These questions never made any sense to me. Why did people simply not understand that my parents could not hear? That's all it is, all of their other senses work perfectly fine, better if anything.

I came to learn that hearing people did not know how to act when deaf people were around. The idea that deaf people were some kind of attraction to be viewed in public, to be ogled at, always stung in the most sharp and passive-aggressive way. The reality is deaf people are fellow people who want to live a happy peaceful life, the same as anyone else. It always infuriated me when people would stare at us in public like we couldn't tell what they were doing, even though they made it so obvious. I understood that seeing someone sign in public was an interesting thing that most people don't get to see, but to throw away any sense of respect just to fulfill your curiosity just felt gross. Another common thing that hearing people do is come up to a deaf person and say “OMG! I know sign language”, and proceed to do the alphabet or sign their name before leaving. This was always such an odd thing to witness. I never understood why people thought it was appropriate to walk up to a stranger and proclaim they have a connection when they clearly do not. It would be the same as hearing someone speak Spanish in public, running up to them to say “Hello my name is blank”, and then leaving. No one does that, it's weird. So why do people do it to deaf people?

ASL is a beautiful language where you express your thoughts in an almost play-like sequence with flourishes and extreme facial expressions, telling a compelling story. My favorite part of ASL is the intertwining of it all. If you ever go to a deaf event, you might assume that it's going to be groups of two people standing in front of each other signing to each other. In reality, it's a crowd of people all signing to each other almost as one big play. You might start a conversation with one person but by the end, you’ve talked to eight other people. There’s always loud music and conversations you can hear across the campus as well, contrary to common belief. At deaf events, there is no pressure to be quiet or to conform to a hearing society - there is only deaf joy.

Another thing people expect is that being around deaf people is a quiet existence with no sound but a piercing silence. They could not be more wrong. Most of the deaf

people I've met actually speak while they sign, and if they're not saying "words" they're using noises to represent their emotions during that conversation. So many people have so many assumptions about what the deaf community is like, and most of the time they are wrong. This isn't due to people not caring about them, but just from a lack of knowledge.

When I was ten years old, I started attending a camp called Camp Mark Seven (CM7). It was a sleep-away camp in the Adirondack Mountains that housed only Children of Deaf Adults (CODA). CM7 was my home away from home. A place where everyone had the same life experience as me: a hearing kid with deaf parents. CM7 was the one place where I never had to explain my family, how deafness worked, or answer any stupid questions. I only had to explain why I had four parents. The best part of camp was ASL night which was a night for all of us kids to learn about our culture a little more. We did things like watching ASL music videos - a personal favorite of mine, showing how hard lip reading really was, and even artwork made by deaf artists. One of those artworks that really impacted me was "The Family Dog" by Susan Dupor. This artwork stuck with me as it showed the experience many deaf children have of being completely disconnected from their hearing family. This is something I've personally witnessed every time we go to visit family.

Growing up, I hated going to my grandparents' house. Instead of a nice family visit, I would just leave feeling frustrated and angry for my parents. My grandparents never learned sign language. Instead, they would just try and talk to my parents in the hopes they would be able to lip read. They never realized that lip reading is actually an extremely hard thing for someone to do due to most people not speaking in the exact same way. This made it impossible for my parents to ever catch an entire story, being left out in the process. So, I always ended up having to interpret everything they were talking about, which made me feel like seeing my grandparents was more of a job than a vacation. One pair of my grandparents also tried very hard to forget the fact that my mom is deaf. They would make her feel bad if she hadn't worn her hearing aids that day, or would expect her to talk more. Despite how hard it was, she did. She spoke more than I'd ever heard from her back home. It felt as though my parents had to become new people just to visit their parents, just to appease them.

Back then people didn't really know very well how to care for Deaf children. Most kids were sent to hearing schools, and if there were none nearby that would take them they were sent to boarding schools. The lucky ones got sent to deaf institutes. Most schools at the time banned sign language, and all deaf students were taught how to speak and lip read. This led to my parents, and many other deaf children, being very behind in their education as they would miss many things their teachers were teaching.

My dad was sent to one of the worst of these schools as a child. The children were forced to speak and would get in trouble for attempting to use sign language, being hit with rulers if they were caught. They were publicly humiliated and ridiculed, treated like animals who needed to be educated in the right way to be a person as if their deafness was something to be beaten out of them. Thankfully nowadays these kinds of schools don't really exist. People are more educated on how to educate deaf children

and how to help them to be successful. Although it has gotten better, there is still a lack of proper education for many deaf students. Many students aren't able to go to deaf institutes or integrated schools and have to learn in a school system designed for students who can hear. This led to a common thought that deaf people were just not as intelligent as their hearing counterparts, which is entirely untrue. If only they were taught sign language and put with teachers who knew how to meet their needs, then they could have been more successful.

Even with all the frustrations other people have given me with having to be an educator for the deaf community, I still have a complete and true love for it. It's such an important part of my identity and my daily life and is something that will never not be part of me. I have and will always stand for and with my community, and if that means being an educator about the Deaf community then I will do just that. I hope that in the future more people can grow to learn and understand what it means to be Deaf and see how beautiful it is. It's a tragedy how the Deaf community, my community, has been treated; But I watch it spread and catch people's attention and curiosity more and more each day, and nothing fills my heart more than that.

Maja Koska

## Press Pause, Reset

Photography

***Third Prize - Poetry***

Noah Chiles

# Skiagraphia

Finding a place not to be is difficult
With speech distant in the memory
With the hand on the forehead
Facing outwards toward the sun
Hide the eyes in a dormant room
Erase vision

Bend the underside of a bowl
Lift the light from a room
Make an echo in a dead space
Make a room and fold it
Shake the room
Casually enter a shadow
Remove the moon from the sky

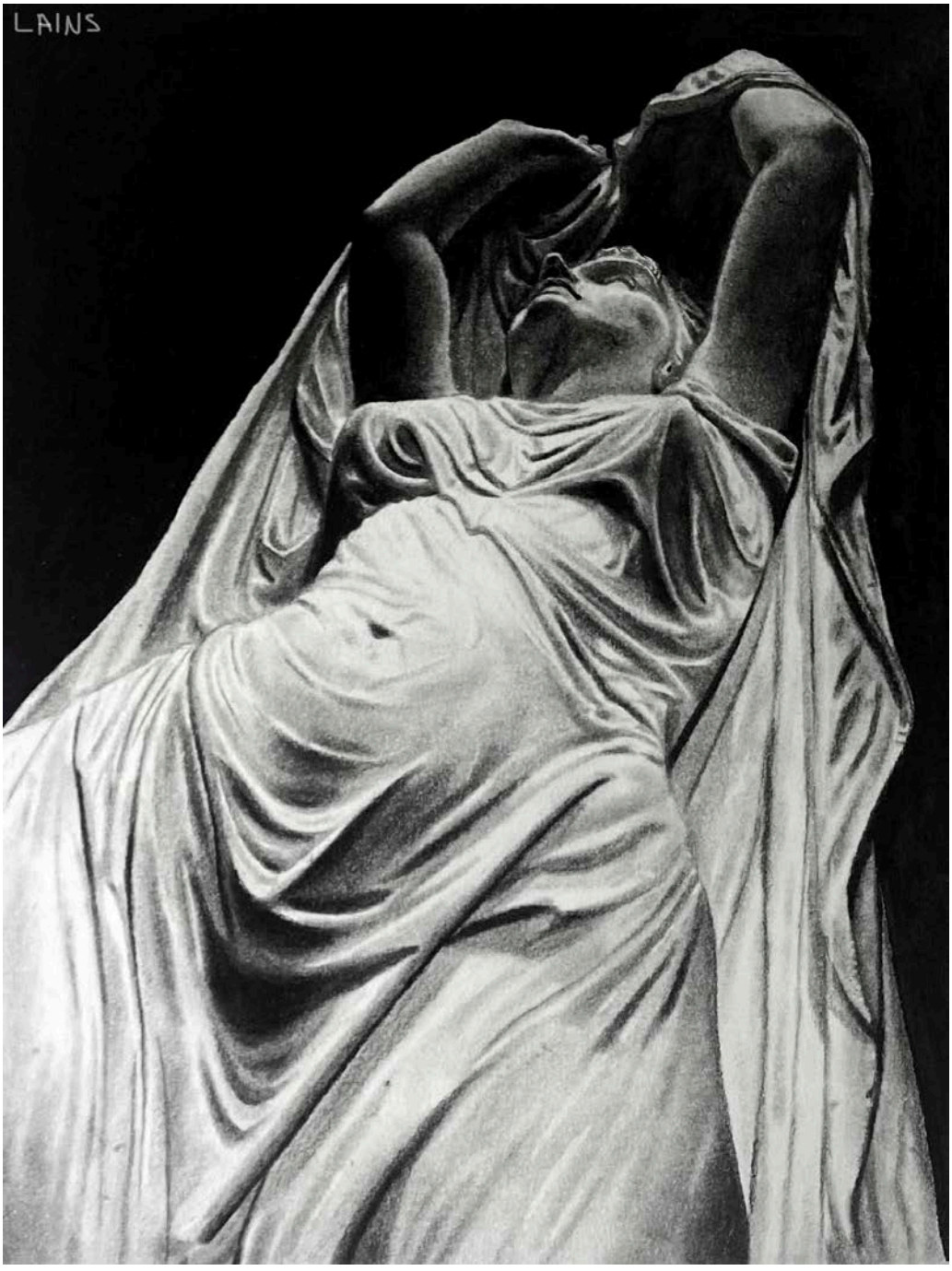
Concern yourself with light
Its movements
Its  language
Its  schedule
Its  precision
Its  tactics
Find a way to communicate
Enter rooms and watch windows
Stare transfixed at opening doors at night
Subtract the dark from a wall
Examine it
Then carefully put it back where it was

Open a door
Stand against a wall
Feel things being changed
Make an echo and let it breathe
Find an empty place and suddenly disappear
Then add the first mark

Lains Herman

# Study of Undine

Charcoal



Phi Phi Truong

# My Cousin with Me

Acrylic Painting

***Microfiction***

Sophia Welland

# Roses

I crushed the wilted rose in between my hands. The red pigment from the petals stained my hands a gooey scarlet. Thorns were pushing roughly against my skin uncomfortably. The opened grave in front of me was screaming at me to stop. I was to let the rose rest with the barely decayed body, not destroy it. However, I needed to eat. I was hungry. This was the first new corpse I had found in ages. I bit the flower of the rose, staining my mouth red. It tasted heavenly. It tasted like a fresh human heart.

***Microfiction***

Angel (Xinyi) Zheng

# Sisters

"Wasn't that a funny story," Margret asked.

Her sister did not reply.

Margret sighed from her spot on the knoll. It had been a month since Agnes stopped talking to her. She couldn't comprehend it. They were so close, and Agnes had seemed happy, in the days before. But now, silence sat between them like a block of stone, heavy and desperate. It threatened to break her.

Margret swallowed a lump in her throat, and brushed fresh-dug dirt from her pants.

"I just want my sister back," she managed to choke out, and left the cemetery.

***Fiction***

Gregory Walter

# Umbral Hearth Aglow

Amber roses sliced in twain. Tentative steps, a staccato against cobblestone. The Venetian quailed at his own shadow, stumbling through the courtyard of his house. Beneath the gibbous moon and battered walls, he hurried towards the door, scratching at its wooden frame. No answer from within the house or even from the streets beyond, just the rattling of shutters and rusted hinges, the Venetian slipping inside before slamming hard the door.

Hands shaking, he lit the lamps, his face as pallid as the moon. The hearth was cold. When had it gone out? What madman fool had let it go out?! He hurried to the wood rack, tossing logs and twigs into a pile as his eyes darted over his shoulder. The house was settling all around him, the gloom whelming from every corner of the room. Candlelight shrank, huddling close to their wicks. It was all the Venetian could do to hold off a shortness of breath. A bead of sweat across the forehead for every failure to light his second match.

No sooner had a flame ignited than he felt wind beneath his feet, the pull on the back of his collar sending him flying across the room. He screamed, his eyes wide and trembling. He raised his arms over his face, only to feel something cold wrap tight around his ankle, mere moments from the wall.

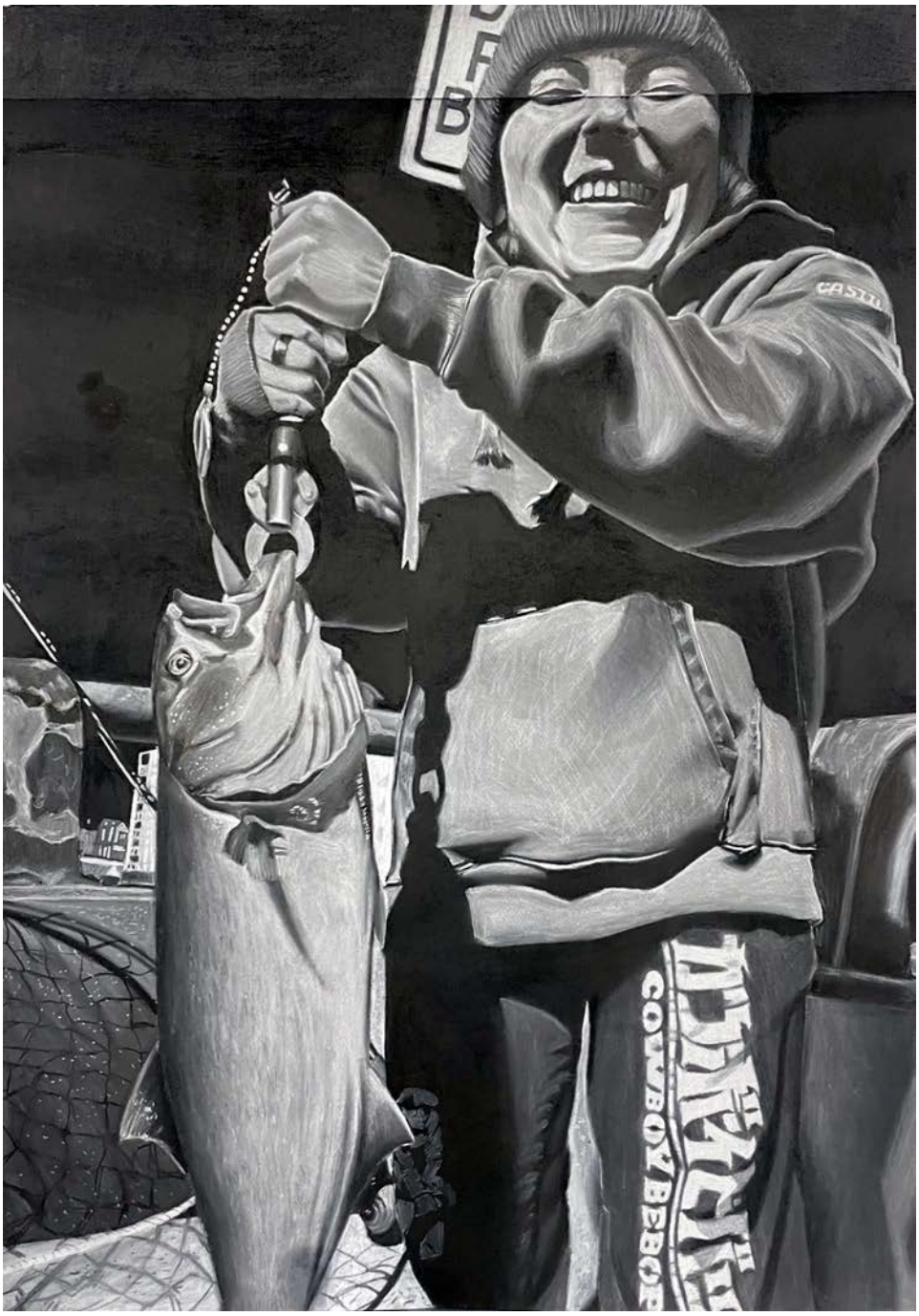
"What madness is this?!" he said, now hanging upside down. Staring up he found but naught to hold him up. But he knew. The moment he stared back at the wall, he knew just whom to blame. In vicious mockery it stood, a shadow, his shadow, bereft of anchor to any surface but its own. "No!" said the Venetian. "You can't! You promised me! YOU PROMISED!!"

The shadow said nothing, snickering wide a rictus grin, and to any who would have gazed upon the pair, they would have seen how the shadow held its master up, moments before setting him aflame.

Maryory Enamorado

# Fishing

Charcoal



Dominique Robinson

# Snow Jellies

Digital Media

Elias Tsougranis

# Flicker

Digital Media

***Poetry***

Aigul Egemberdieva

# Be a Woman

Don't run fast.
Boys might see your underwear.

Don't get your dress dirty.
A girl should look neat.

Menstruation is a shame.
Don't discuss it, and don't invent pain that doesn't exist.

Don't you dare have a boyfriend.
Then no one will marry you.

It's time for you to get married.
My friends' daughters are already married and have children.

Don't laugh out loud at your wedding.
It doesn't matter that you're happy.

Bow to all your husband's relatives and bow to his parents
Until the end of your days.

Nobody asked how you were feeling.
If your mother-in-law says, get up and do it.

If you quarreled with your husband,
don't even think about returning to your father's house.

Tie up your belly after giving birth; your husband won't want you.
When are you going to have a second?...

Why do you need education?
You already have kids; let them study.

Why do you need to be slim?
You are already married; your husband loves you like this.

Support your husband in everything and be patient.
Who needs you with two children?

Stay at home and don't go anywhere.
It's time to stop your partying with your friends.

Who else will I lose my temper with if not you?
You are my daughter.

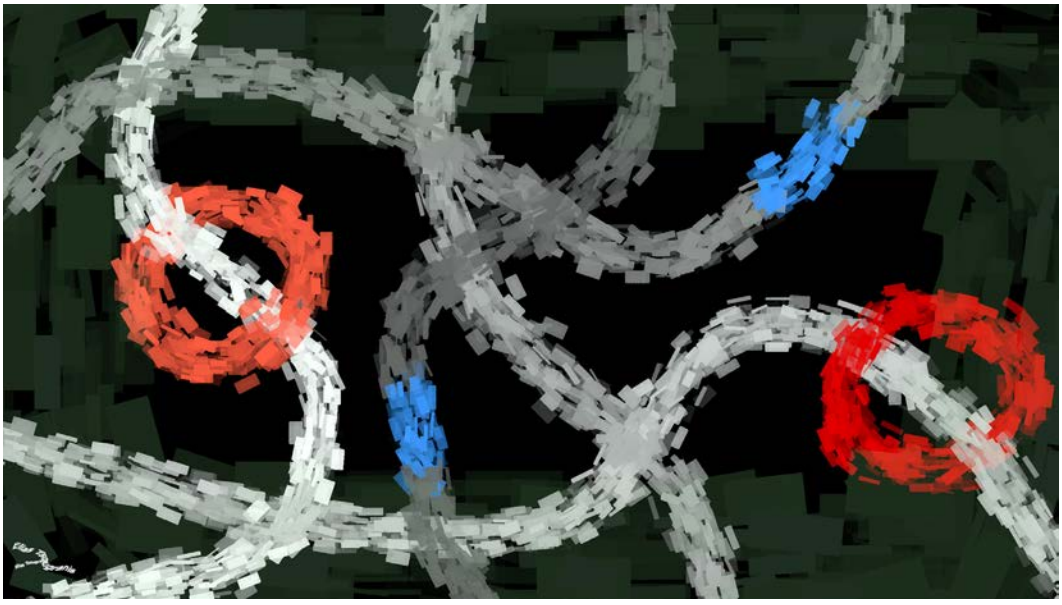
You are already thirty years old.
You can't dream stupidly.

This is how we lived, and so will you.
It's a pity you don't have a daughter.

Elias Tsougranis

## Marching Chains

Digital Media



*Microfiction*

Janine Wonnacott

## The Abandoned Suitcase

One airport policeman stood by the fast food counter. Undaunted, she rolled her suitcase beside him and studied the menu board. Hungry travelers shuffled around her, dragging luggage, trailed by cranky kids, some no taller than the handle of her suitcase. The cop scanned the crowd. She let go of the suitcase, stood for fifty seconds. Then she walked decisively away.

Fifteen feet. Thirty.

Suddenly someone grabbed her arm. She didn't recognize this cop.

"Are you the role-player?" he asked.

She grinned. "Yup. Your friend back there lacks some situational awareness."

The officer nodded, proud of himself.

"Let's debrief."

Dominique Robinson

## Forget-me-not

Digital Media

*Fiction*

Elizabeth Austin

# Until I Couldn't Anymore

I sat quietly on the front porch and waited. I knew you would come home. You always did. You were all I had left. I waited on that porch until my eyes became heavy and my feet fell asleep. I waited on that porch until the sun hung low and orange in the sky.

I sat and waited on that porch as the colors in the heavens slowly faded into nothing and left an eerie darkness in its wake.

I waited until I couldn't anymore.

I sat now on my bed watching the window as if it held my whole life. In some ways it did.

I watched and I listened. I listened for the creak of the door I heard every evening as you came in to kiss me goodnight. I listened to the TV playing in the living room while you snored fast asleep in our little old rocking chair half broken on the rug.

I listened until I couldn't anymore.

I woke up to an empty room. An empty house. An empty porch. There was no one here but me. I didn't like this silence that flooded into our home. Our house was always quiet, but this was different. This was a loneliness I wasn't used to. A coldness I had never felt before.

The hours slowly crawled by as I curled up in your rocking chair, grasping at the few things left of you here. I didn't know how I knew it then, but I knew you weren't coming back to me.

My gaze fell out the window as I watched the little town in front of me. I watched as the world bustled around me while my world was left frozen in place. I waited until the moon once again showed her face. I slowly tipped toed out on the porch lowering myself onto the cold hard wood. I sat on that porch until my knees ached and my throat was raw.

I sat on that porch until I couldn't anymore.

I shut my eyes and laid my head in my lap. I was here alone, but on this porch with my eyes closed and time moving slowly beside me I could pretend. I could pretend that you were here; sitting next to me. I could pretend that the days that have now passed were only hours. I could imagine the evenings we used to have together. How we danced in the candlelight and talked for hours about nothing at all. I smiled a little,

ignoring the shiver that made its way slowly up my spine.

If I closed my eyes and dreamed hard enough I could pretend that this porch wasn't empty. So that's what I did. I dreamed. I pretended until I became dizzy and the world was nothing more than a blur. I pretended until the moon but all had left the sky.

I pretended until I couldn't anymore.

Phi Phi Truong

## My Materials

Acrylic Painting

***Poetry***

Jack Magill

# A Walk...

A walk on the beach.
Traveling far and seeing much,
with no end in sight.
Every step, a print left behind.
Looking back, you can't see them all.

But they are there.
And with memories you may even recall.
As time goes on,
the tides rise.
Soon they fade from the hands of sea.

Do not panic.
For they are not lost.
They are only at peace.

***Poetry***

Lains Herman

# Conversation with the Big Man

god screams from billboards on

southern highways like june cicadas,

damning cross-country drivers to hell

if they don't flip on their hazards, pull over,

and pray to jesus christ in roadside gravel.

i have a hunch that Jesus might get tired

of listening to big-hat vacation grandmas

pleading for sunny-skied florida trips.

years ago, on my bedroom carpet,

i opened the windows and cried against

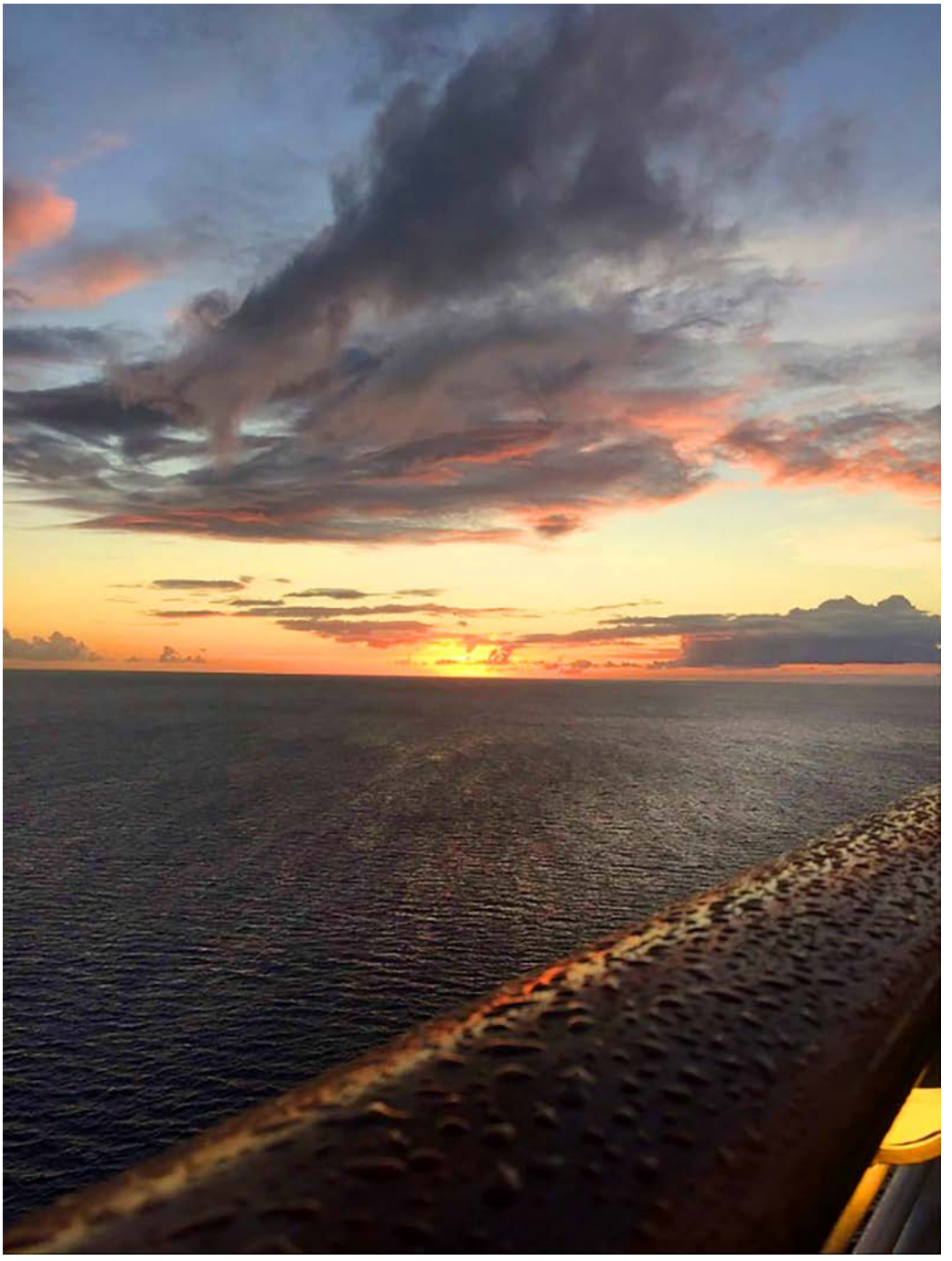
the hourly train and its cricket friends.

jesus told me to be nicer to my mother.

Maja Koska

# Sunset Over Ocean Horizon

Photography



Abigail Jensen

# When I Close My Eyes

Quilled Paper

***Poetry***

Theresa Zukowski

# Irreparable

Ten pounds of pressure
is all it took
to end my career
I've tried every remedy
all the pills possible
needle therapy and decompression
TENS unit, numbing patches
physical therapy, deep-tissue massage
stabbing, aching, and twitching muscles
searing migraines and ringing ears
It'll only get worse
with melancholy, I age
knowing my body can't
recover or repair itself
I watch alien eyes
prepare for new days
waiting for my life
to revert to normal
together, with battle buddies
moaning about the aches
and sharing our experiences
that only we have
and only we understand.

***Poetry***

Elizabeth Austin

# Meaningless Words

Mari was a girl who rarely spoke at all
She didn't like the way words sounded on her lips
How little they conveyed
She didn't like the box they put her in
And this box she refused to stay

Mari was a girl who lived inside herself
A calmer, quieter place
This outside world didn't make sense to her
It was all just noise to fill the space

Mari was a girl of feelings
For feelings she understood
The perception of feeling lost in this fragmented world
In a way that only Mari could

Why speak when no one will listen

Why fill a mind that has too much inside

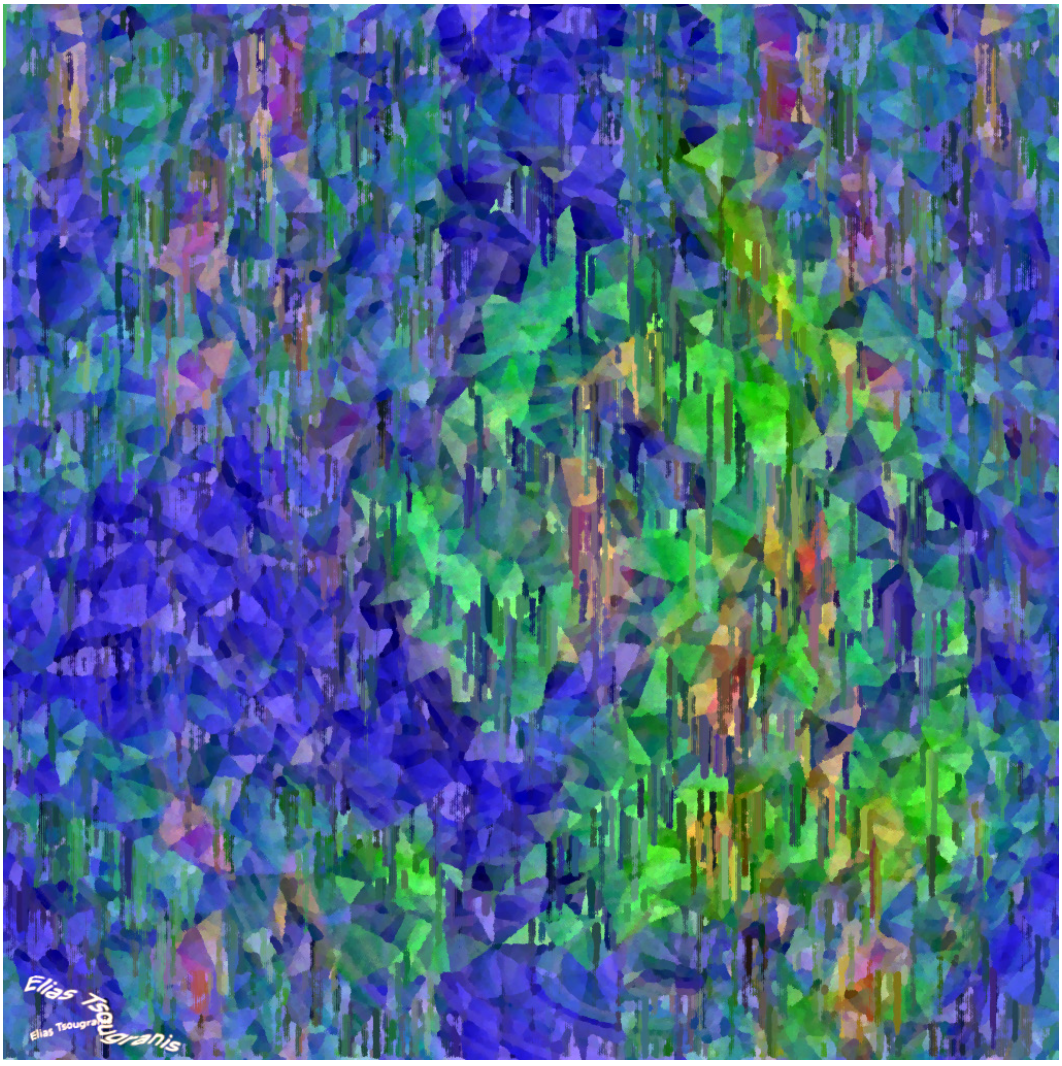
Why hurt a girl who's already broken

Why give to her words when she's already tried

Elias Tsougranis

# Colorful Thought

Digital Media



Phi Phi Truong

# Smiling Me

Acrylic

Rachel Lambert

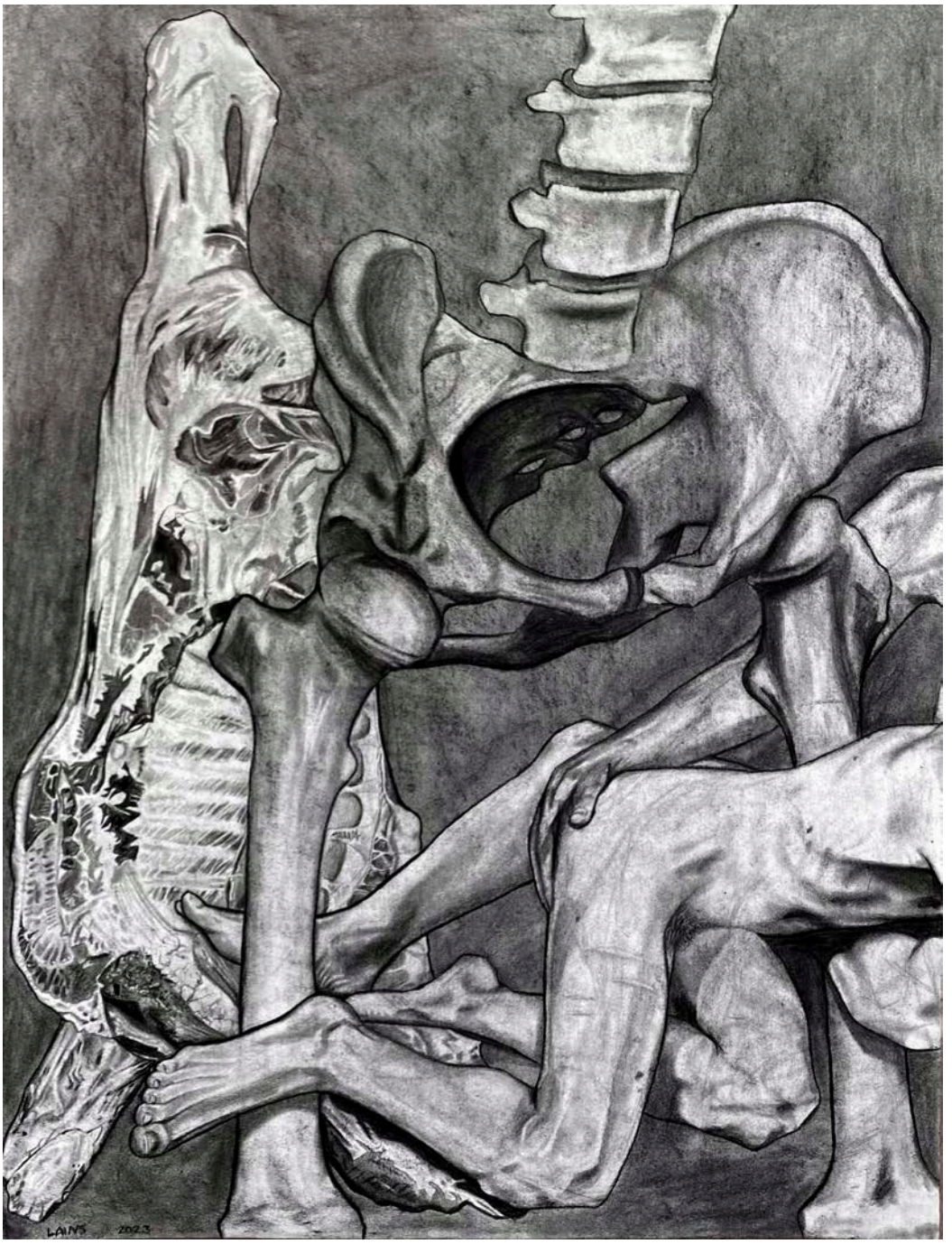
# Thirst

Digital Media

Lains Herman

# To Eat

Charcoal



*Poetry*

Mateus Barbosa

# They Say What I Should Be

It is one more day in America,
That is how they call it, America!
Proud, proud, proud.
I can hear them saying what I should be.
No gay, no POC, no immigrant.

I am not from here,
My feet can touch the ground.
Because I am not America,
I am not American.
I know who I am,
In America, I can't be this,
They say what I should be.

They say that in America.
The dreams are big.
Maybe I am too small.
Maybe I am too gay.
Maybe I am too Latino.

I want to be America like they say.
But the me does not let me.
I am too small.
I am too gay.
I am too Latino.
But they keep saying.
I keep being.

***Poetry***

Lains Herman

# Tomatoes

when my grandmother turned over on her back
her daughter (my aunt) asked me what I thought of her
when she was still with us

i said she was like an angel to me
because she played cards with me at the dinner table

her daughter (my aunt) laughed at me but i was so young barely seven
that the laugh didn't hit my brain, rather settled
into my heart and grew with me for the forever that brought me to now

her six daughters and one son were filled with her pain,
with their mother's pain, that she gifted them,

and her daughter, her second youngest daughter (my aunt)
planted in me an alike pain when i was so young barely seven
and my mother watered it

a child sees an angel in a mother who is not her own
and the child of the mother sees instead a god

and we have never had great relationships with our gods –
just look at what we have done to the trees

born veined with sick envy we beg skeletons for flesh to feed on

before the day my grandmother fell to the floor
she set tomatoes on the windowsill

Arli Orellana Damas

# Cool Interests!

Digital Media

Rachel Lambert

# Floral Leopard

Digital Media

*Poetry*

Bretton Watts

# Vertigo

It vexes me conceptually that when we fight

We rarely see the damage that is thrust upon the innocent and frail.

Shooting without warning

It's a hit and run yet legal

Support the side that gets the votes

The money and oil, pure evil.

Donations fall upon deaf ears

A new year full of opportunities for certain special people

Babies cry and die before they're even truly people
But there is time

And there is hope

For generations future

We sail towards greater things

Our way isn't paved forever

It's only torn and sutured

The sun will rise

A full day's time

And we can try again.

***Poetry***

Janine Wonnacott

# Washing (A Villanelle)

She didn't see her son that night or day.
But whether stained with yellow or with red,
She knows his clothes need washing anyway.

Her babe had wet the bed. He "helped" today.
But the nervous teen so quickly strips his bed
She didn't see. Her son some night or day

Will hold hands with a girl. She tries to say,
"It's just a crush." But when May shares his bed,
She knows. His clothes need washing anyway.

Their bodies under sheets, he'd said farewell to May.
Then trenches deep, with rifles, dirt, and lead,
She didn't see her son that night or day.

Who does his washing now, and will they spray
The sleeve that shows he's chocolate ration-fed?
She knows his clothes need washing. Anyway -

Which loss is more a loss? Which loss will stay?
Her babe? A girl's true love? The troops? The dead?
She doesn't see her son at night or day -
She hopes his clothes need washing, anyway.

Abigail Jensen

# Carnal Roses

Pen and charcoal pencil on toned paper

Christian Aliferis

# Column

Ceramics

***Poetry***

Osna Alizai

# Where I'm From

I come from female solitude,
Where men will say your attitude defines your gratitude.
Instead I learned from my sister,
Who is kind yet stubborn, and would never affirm.
She taught me to be unapologetically myself and to hold the door for the elderly,
And that sometimes, it's okay to respond bitterly.
I quickly learned my mother's words are wise.
Strive for independence, she'd tell me.
Expand your knowledge, aim for college.
You'll meet mental blockage, you'll want to give up.
It's fundamental to continue, find your motivation within you.
And remember, no one can do it for you.

I come from miles of moving legs,
The kind with grass, hills, and dreadful treads.
Where you train to avoid being the rotten egg.
When tassels were turned, runs turned into memories
And looking back on pictures almost feels like watching a documentary.
For many moments I thought,
Will the grades, honors, and cords give me a future as solid as bedrock?
Or will my future look back and tell me, the expectations were not met.
So I wonder if the declaration of my plan to independence and success ends up saying "I'm a mess."

I come from long walks with a pomeranian-mix of a friend,
He'll jump on the couch, only because he's declared himself allowed.
I've thought about telling him, "Don't you realize your job is to defend?"
His one eye tells me he can definitely comprehend.
Why else would someone tell you "A dog is a man's best friend"
Strangely, I suspect he likes the smell of coffee.
You could describe him as bossy, or even a little nosy
Which inspired me to write a story called "T is for Tobi"

Not only am I from, but I continue to become.
In this population where you sometimes feel like a breadcrumb,
Where your income is the rule of thumb, I will not succumb.
I will remind myself not to feel dumb,
And to continue marching to the beat of my own drum.

Abigail Jensen

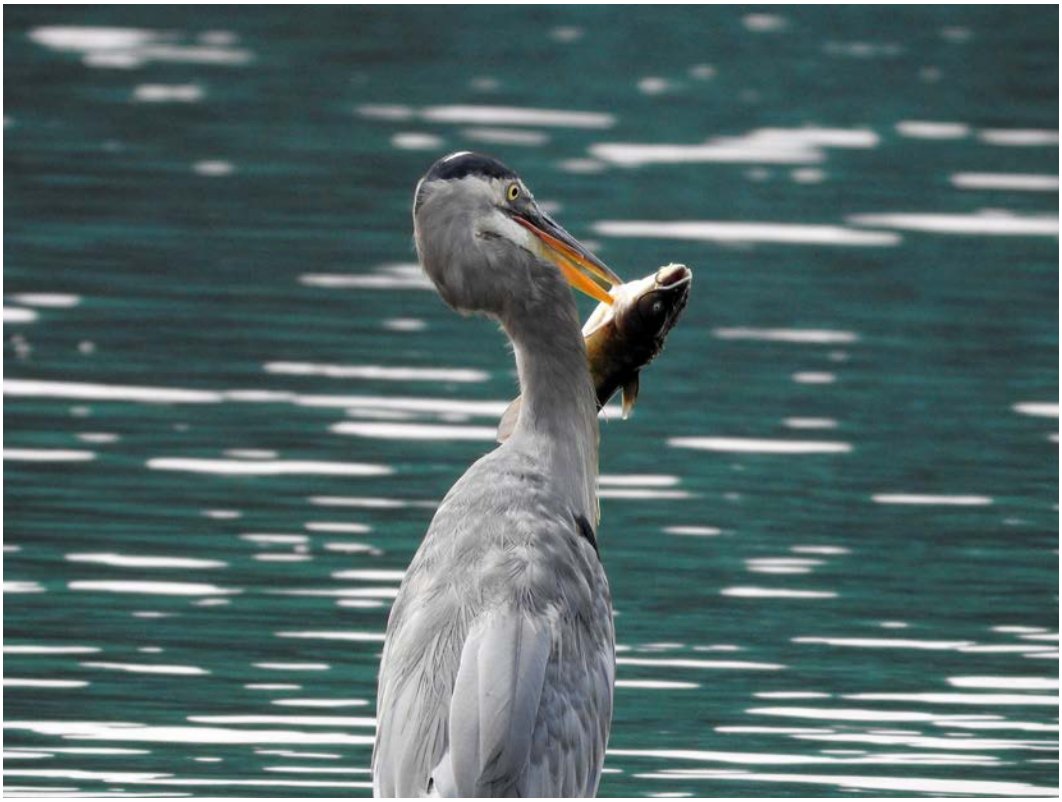
# Handwriting

Polymer clay, wire, aluminum foil, and acrylic paint

Grace Panisara Tongnobhakun

# Fish Caught

Photography



# NOTES

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